MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT THE UNION

President Patton, Vice President Karen Miller and EVP David Provost, would like to share with the facilities team our responses to your questions you posed at your open meeting last week with facilities management. We would be glad to meet with you in the coming days if you have further questions that we can answer or concerns you'd like to discuss. We appreciate your thoughtful approach in considering this these issues.

Where does the Union get employee names and contact information from?

The Union did not get this information from the College. We treat all of our employees' personal information as strictly confidential and we only release it if compelled by law. Unions obtain employee names and contact information from a variety of sources including social media, internet searches and information they get from pro-union employees.

If we become unionized, do they own us – would we be College or Union employees?

You would still be College employees, but the College would be required by law to deal with the Union as the exclusive spokesperson and bargaining representative regarding your current and future terms and conditions of employment.

Who is being approached?

We don't know who the Union organizers have contacted, but we have heard they approached employees in facilities and in dining services.

If some staff do not support the Union and it is voted in, do all have to be part of it?

Yes, if there is an election everyone in the designated voting group will be bound by the outcome. The election is decided by a majority of votes cast. Turnout is critical. For example, if there are 100 employees in the bargaining unit but only 70 show up to vote, then the Union would only need 36 votes to win, after which the Union would represent all 100 employees in the bargaining unit.

How did the Union drive come about? How did the Union know to approach Middlebury staff?

Middlebury is a top employer and an obvious place for the Union to try to obtain new dues-paying members. However, we are not privy to the details of who first contacted who. As we have mentioned earlier, even though we think Middlebury employees are better off in a non-unionized environment, we support the rights of employees to choose to work in a union or non-union environment.

What does this mean for compensation and benefits?

The College has a long history of providing competitive wages and an excellent benefits package. If the Union is voted in, everything you now have and everything you will have in the future would be up for negotiation. Most first contracts take more than a year to negotiate. During that time your current wages and benefits would remain in place, but when a Union contract is finally reached, anything is possible – you could end up with more, the same, or less than you had before unionization. The administration is not legally able to make any planned changes during union activity.

Can the Union supporters approach you during work hours? Can we tell them to go away?

You have the right to talk to anyone, and you have also have the right tell anyone who is trying to solicit you to go away. This is true regardless of whether the solicitation happens at work, via text or phone call, or at your home if a solicitor shows up on your doorstep.

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What is the timeframe for the Union process?

There is no set timeframe. Most union organizing drives last 2-3 months, but they can last for up to a year or longer. No changes in employee work conditions can be made during this time.

Who votes? Do all staff need to vote? Is voting mandatory?

Everyone in the defined voting group would be eligible to vote. Voting is not mandatory, but everyone will be bound by the outcome, so the College would strongly encourage everyone to vote. This decision is too important to let others decide for you.

Would there be local and/or national dues?

Union Dues are paid to the Local, and the Local sends a portion of those dues to the National Union headquarters.

What would the Union dues be? Is there an 'initiation fee'?

This is a question for the Union since it decides how much to charge its members, and the Union can increase the Dues whenever it decides. Most unions charge an initiation fee, but they often waive the fee for a newly formed bargaining unit as an incentive to support the union.

Would it be an open or closed shop?

An "Open Shop" means individual employees can choose whether or not to join the Union and pay Dues. A Closed Shop means everyone must join and pay Union Dues, and anyone refusing to pay is terminated. "Closed Shops" are illegal in 27 States that have "Right-To-Work" laws giving individuals the right to keep their jobs even if they refuse to pay the Union. As a result of a recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, Closed Shops are also illegal for all public sector employees who work for federal, state or local governments including public school districts. However, employees who work for private businesses or institutions in Vermont can be forced to pay Dues in a Closed Shop because Vermont does not have a "Right-To-Work" law. Whether you would have an Open Shop or a Closed Shop depends on what is agreed to in bargaining. The vast majority of Union contracts in Vermont and other non-Right-to-Work States have Closed Shop clauses forcing everyone to pay Union Dues because this costs nothing for the employer and it is typically a high-priority item for the Union.

Can certain parts of Facilities be part of the Union and others not?

Yes. Certain parts of Facilities can be treated as a separate group.

Can a master craftsman such as Electrician or Plumber be part of a Union as an individual but have the College benefits and be a College employee?

If the master craftsman such as Electricians and Plumbers are treated as a separate group, they could have their own Union election; however they would still be College employees with or without a Union.

If you are part of a Union will your job description change?

This would depend on what is agreed to in negotiations.

Could you be replaced with a more senior Union person from elsewhere?

Again, this would depend on what is agreed to in negotiations.

What determines if a yellow Union authorization card is an official vote?

Union cards are only needed to petition the NLRB for an election. If there is an election, then everyone is free to vote either way regardless of whether you signed a union authorization card.

For long-term College employees, is there a possibility that their current hourly pay rate would be reduced?

This would depend on what is agreed to in negotiations. The College cannot predict what the results would be.

In a Union, is the hourly pay rate the same for all within a given position or are there levels based on years of service?

Once again, this would depend on what is agreed to in negotiations. Keep in mind that when a union wins an election, all it wins is the right to ask for things across a bargaining table, but management has the right to say no to any proposal that it disagrees with.